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ABSTRACT

The first phase of a four-phase needs assessment study of children's services in West Virginia is reported at length in this document. (The remaining three phases are also briefly described.) In this first phase of the study, the efforts of other states in providing children's services were surveyed, relevant literature was reviewed, and applicable materials from within West Virginia were analyzed. The resulting conceptual framework described (1) actual services delivered to children 6 years of age and under, (2) process variables which determined the ways in which services were provided, and (3) the legal, social, and political context in which children's services and delivery were embedded. The framework was subsequently examined for external validity through a survey of 86 West Virginia children's services professionals, 55 public school personnel, and 81 national experts in children's services. Survey participants rated the importance of and estimated the current status of 27 statements about the relationship of the family to children's services, societal attitudes toward children's needs, the role of the state, the perspective or focus of delivery systems, and service delivery. The conceptual framework was found to be valid for use in developing an instrument for assessing children's services provision in West Virginia. Instruments developed are attached. (Author/RH)

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DEFINING AND ASSESSING CHILDREN'S SERVICES AT THE STATE LEVEL

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Public policy towards children is an issue of growing interest and concern. Professionals in the field are recognizing that meeting children's needs involves the political process and demands increasingly sophisticated justification for a share of decreasing resources.

Ironically, more adamant advocacy for chi'dren's rights to services is emerging as the federal government is relinquishing many of its ties to services for young children. The responsibility for providing children's services, therefore, is being left to the discretion of individual states. The quantity and quality of services provided to children will consequently vary from one state to another, depending upon its stance toward children and available resources.

On a statewide basis, the availability, accessibility and delivery of services to children should be a product of and commitment to effective planning. Effective planning is dependent upon the ability to identify and document relevant needs. In order to provide an initial data base for comprehensive planning, the Center for the Study of Early Childhood, Middle Childhood and Adolescent Education at the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies conducted a study of children's services needs within West Virginia. This project was initiated during the Fall of 1980,and is scheduled for completion in December, 1981.

The purpose of this paper/presentation is to provide an overview of the total needs assessment study. More specifically, this paper/presentation will describe the needs assessment rationale and model utilized to conduct this study, present the conceptual framework for children's services, describe the validation study and the resultant findings. Finally, some of the major issues and problems associated with the study will be discussed.

OVERVIEW OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT MODEL[1]

The needs assessment model utilized in this project was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Develop a conceptual framework for conducting a statewide assessment of children's services needs. The conceptual framework, derived from specific observations and data collection, defined what children's services ought to encompass. The resulting framework provided the parameters within which the subsequent data collection and analysis occurred.

2. Conduct a conceptual needs assessment of children's services within the state. This needs assessment process was designed to identify children's services needs on a generic level. It took place within the parameters established by the previously developed conceptual framework. The result of this process was the identification of priority need areas for a children's services program. These priority need areas could also be translated into general (usually non-measureable) program goals for children's services programs.

3. Develop and implement (on a demonstration/model basis) an "operational" needs assessment to identify children's services needs on a specific operational level. This needs assessment process took place within one of the priority need areas which was identified through the conceptual needs assessment process. The results of this process will be the identification of specific need areas (measureable program objectives or outcome measures) for a children's services program.

4. Development of goals and objectives for programs serving children's needs based upon needs identified through the conceptual and operational needs assessments.

These four objectives define the four phases of the needs assessment model utilized in this study. Phase One (Conceptual Framework Development) was designed to produce a conceptual framework or definition of children's

[1] See Children's Services Needs Assessment Project - Needs Assessment Model for a complete discussion of the model.

services for West Virginia. Phase Two (Conceptual Needs Assessment) was directed at producing a generic level assessment of children's services needs with the State. Phase Three (Operational Needs Assessment) was directed at further refining a previously identified conceptual need area through planning and conducting a specific, operational needs assessment. Phase Four (Goal and Objective Development) of the model consisted of a two-pronged approach where needs identified through the conceptual and operational needs assessments were presented as goals and objectives for a children's services program.

Phase One: Conceptual Framework Development

The initial phase of the needs assessment process focused on defining the concept of children's services. This phase addressed the question of "What should children's services encompass?" The answer to this question provided the conceptual framework for all succeeding phases of the needs assessment.

The conceptual framework was developed by surveying the efforts of other states in providing children's services, reviewing relevant literature, and analyzing applicable materials from within West Virginia. The data necessary to conduct these activities was obtained through a formal survey of each state, a manual and computerized literature search (limited to the last 10 years), and requests to appropriate agencies/individuals within West Virginia.

These documents and materials were analyzed, synthesized and integrated into a conceptual framework for children's services. The preliminary draft of the conceptual framework was externally validated through a dissemination and feedback process. The resultant conceptual framework provided the parameters and direction for planning and conducting the conceptual needs

assessment and the development and implementation of the demonstration/ model operational needs assessment.

Phase Two: Conceptual Needs Assessment

Using the conceptual framework which was developed to establish parameters, a statewide assessment of "conceptual needs" related to children's services was conducted. The primary purpose of this facet of the study was to identify, on a conceptual level, the perceived needs for children's services within the state.

The conceptual needs assessment was directed at gathering perceptual data only. A survey, designed to gather perceptions concerning the current status and importance of children's services within West Virginia, was conducted. The survey instrument consisted of a series of possible objectives, evolved directly from the validated conceptual framework, for a comprehensive program of children's services within the State.

When analyzed and categorized according to perceived importance and current performance levels, priority need areas will be identifiable. These priority need areas will be used to determine the focus for the more specific demonstration/model "operational" needs assessment.

Phase Three: Operational Needs Assessment

Utilizing the results of the conceptual needs assessment, a priority need area(s) will be selected for a demonstration/model operational needs assessment. At this level, specific (measureable) program objectives, are delineated. The results of this assessment are then considered as the operational needs (stated as measureable objectives) and can be used as a basis for specific direction in program planning and development.

Phase Four: Goal and Objective Development

The fourth and final phase of the needs assessment process will focus on translating and refining the needs assessment results into meaningful and workable goals and objectives. These goals will reflect the comprehensive concept of children's services developed in conjunction with more specific objectives (for the need area selected for implementation as a demonstration/ model) derived from the results of the operational needs assessment. These goals and objectives will provide a structure for continued planning and development related to children's services.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK[2]

Methodology

The conceptual definition of children's services was developed through a synthesis of three separate lines of inquiry: 1) an extensive review of the literature, 2) a review and analysis of materials/documents relating to children's services in West Virginia and 3) an analysis of the concept of children's services as defined by other states. Research in all three areas was limited to documents/materials dated from 1970,to the present and for children ages six years and below. This focus on children six years and younger often necessitated ignoring those services provided to adolescents and adults which were indirectly, yet positively, of benefit to children. The literature review (based upon computer and manual searches) focused on describing the ways in which children's services ought to be conceptualized and provided.

[2] See Children's Services Needs Assessment Project - Conceptual Framework for a complete discussion of the conceptual framework.

The review of children's services in West Virginia consisted of a review and analysis of some 35 documents which described aspects of children's services within the state. Telephone and face-to-face interviews with selected individuals provided a secondary data collection strategy. This line of inquiry attempted to answer the question of "What is the operational concept of children's services within the state of West Virginia?"

A review of children's services outside of West Virginia was conducted through a national survey, telephone interviews and the analysis of documents from other states. Responses and materials were received from 28 states and indicated that most states provide similar types of services to children. In general, no one department/agency provided or coordinated the planning, financing or delivery of these services.

Conceptual Framework. Current discussions of children's services focus upon the recognition of the family as a mediating structure between the child and society, making it the primary unit for the delivery of services to children. Explicit recognition of the family's role in rearing children reflects, in part, a growing understanding of the impact of the environments in which children live and the lack of success of social agencies which have attempted to assume the family's responsibilities. The concept of environment includes the child's immediate setting as well as the encompassing social context.

The emerging focus on the family also recognizes that helping the family may be the most effective way to improve the lives of most children. According to Keniston (1977)[3], "...families - and the circumstances of their lives - will remain the most critical factors in determining children's fate. To support children almost always requires supporting their families" (p.XIV).

[3] Keniston, K., and The Carnegie Council on Children. All Our Children, The American Family Under Pressure. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977.

Related to both these themes is the renewed belief that children's maximum development depends upon their opportunities to be supported by a nurturing family. Children's services, therefore, are becoming understood as part of family policy.

The review of children's services information in West Virginia resulted in the identification of a two-dimensional framework composed of the actual services (products) delivered to children six years of age and under and the process variables that determine the ways in which these services are delivered. (See Table 1). The resultant two-dimensional framework, however, did not reflect the legal, political and cultural context in which these variables were embedded.

In order to adequately reflect the complexity of children's services, a third dimension was added. The literature review clearly indicated that this third dimension must be the context encompassing children's services. These contextual variables, developed from the literature review, included:

a. research and development: the extent to which research and development affect the children's service system.

b. legislation: the extent to which children's services are impacted/influenced by the legislative process and legislative decisions.

c. state role: the role and function of the state related to children's services.

d. legal system: the role and function of the legal/judicial system related to children's services.

e. attitudes of society: perceptions of citizens towards responsibility for children's services.

The resultant definition of children's services became a three-dimensional framework. This framework consisted of the services provided to children, the ways in which these services were delivered and the legal, political and social contextual variables in which children's services and their delivery were embedded. (See Figure 1).

TABLE I

Children's Services in West Virginia
Service and Delivery Variables

SERVICES

a.	Day Care Services	Private and Public Day Care Services
b.	Child Care Services	Child care services (excluding Day Care Services) include the broad range of child care services in group centers and family and in-home programs.
c.	Welfare Services	Examples of specific services included under this category are foster care and adoption services, protective services and homemaker services.
d.	Education Services	Services included under this category are infant stimulation programs, early education services, parent education and public health education.
e.	Health Services	Specific health services include prenatal care and dental health services.
f.	Mental Health Services	Services provided under the mental health category include psychiatric and psychological diagnosis and evaluation, psychiatric treatment, assistance with temporary hospital care, and consultation and training.
g.	Specialized/Support Services	Specialized/Support services include training, family planning, transportation, nutrition, and outreach services.

DELIVERY VARIABLES

a. Delivery: the process/system through which direct and indirect services are provided.

b. Resources: the extent to which direct service efforts are adequately supported.

c. Integration: the extent to which services are integrated or delivered in isolation of each other.

d. Collaboration: the extent to which there is collaboration and cooperation horizontally and vertically within the system.

e. Approach: the extent to which the intervention is preventive or reactive.

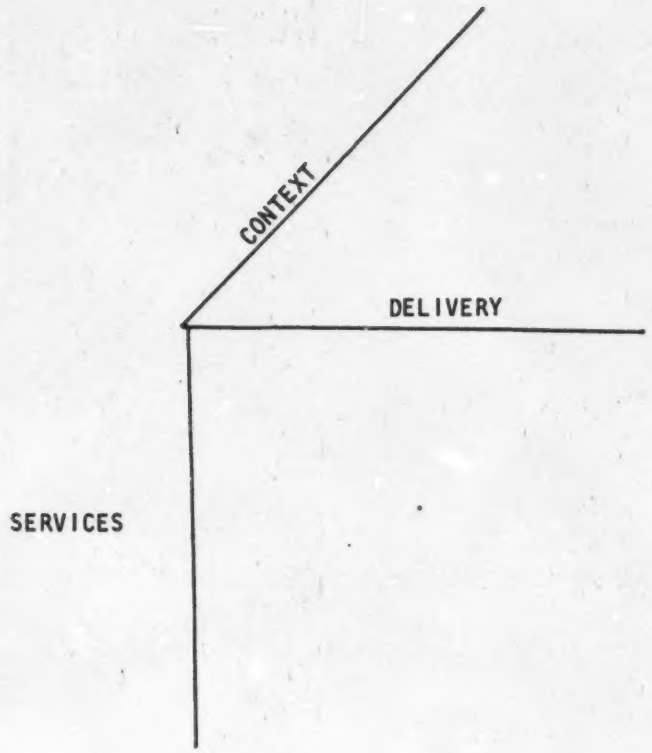
f. Focus: the extent to which services are focused on the individual versus the family.

g. Visibility: the extent to which children's services and their delivery are known by the public.

h. Organizational Structure: the formal organization through which children's services are developed and delivered.

Figure 1

Children's Services Conceptual Framework



Services: actual services (products) delivered to children six years of age and under

Delivery: process variables which determine the ways in which services are provided

Context: legal, social, and political context in which children's services and delivery are embedded

These three dimensions interact with each other in a multi-dimensional framework, each factor interacting with and infringing upon the others. All these factors, in turn, impact the family and the ways in which they can attempt to meet their needs and fulfill their childrearing responsibilities. Families can only provide needed services to their children to the extent these services are available and accessible. These aspects are strongly influenced by social, political and legal variables. Children's services in West Virginia, therefore, can only be comprehensively defined when the services, delivery, and contextual variables are considered interactively. See Figure 2).

VALIDATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK[4]

Following development of a preliminary conceptual framework, the external validity of the framework was examined. A survey was administered to three selected groups of individuals - 86 children's services professionals in West Virginia, 55 public school personnel, and 81 national experts in children's services.

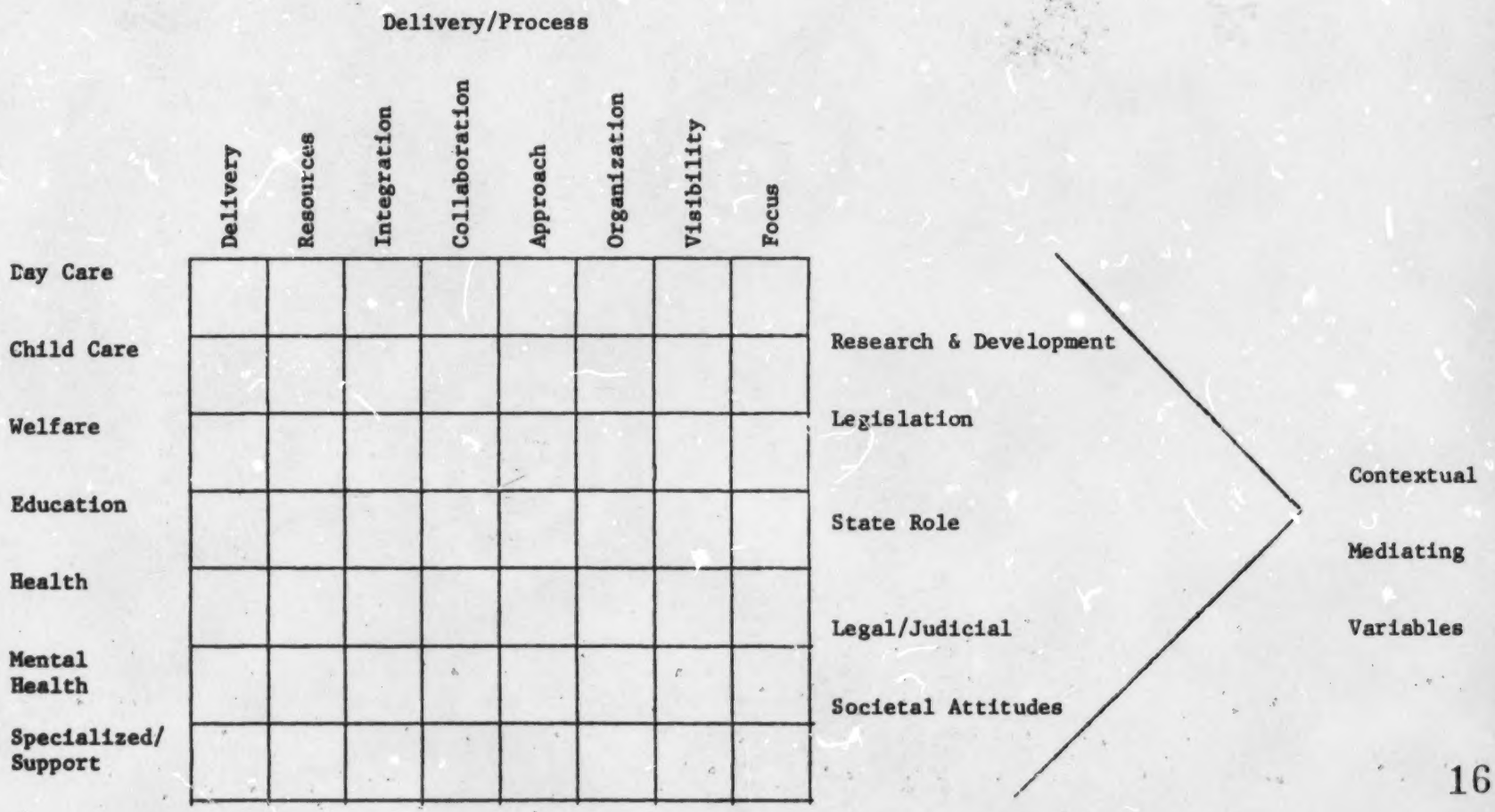
Twenty-seven concepts/statements related to children's services were synthesized from the preliminary conceptual framework (See Attachment A). These concepts/statements were organized around the five major themes presented below:

1. Relationship of the Family to Children's Services
2. Societal Attitudes Toward Children's Needs
3. Role of the State
4. Perspective/Focus of the Delivery System
5. Service Delivery

[4] See Children's Services Needs Assessment Project - Validation Study for a complete report of the validation study.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework For Children's Services in West Virginia



The West Virginia public school personnel and children's services professionals were requested to indicate the "Importance" and "Current Status" of each concept/statement as they were related to children's services in West Virginia. The national children's services experts were requested to respond to each statement in terms of its "Importance" in the development of a comprehensive definition of children's services in West Virginia.

Overall, more than 55% of the surveys were returned. Seventy-five (75%) percent of the public school representatives, 50.6% of the National experts and 48.8% of the West Virginia children's services professionals responded.

For purposes of analyses, the 27 items were considered as elements of the five major themes. A summary of the three target group responses to each major theme is provided in Table 2.

The results of the validation study data provided sufficient evidence to conclude that the preliminary children's services conceptual framework was valid. More than 85% of the responses to four of the themes were "Fairly Important" or "Highly Important". This response pattern was evident for both the general factor and across each individual item.

The only exception to these findings related to those items concerning the role of the state. Analysis of the combined responses related in this area indicated more than 64% of the responses fell into the "Fairly Important" or "Highly Important" categories. Although these data substantiate a conclusion that these items were perceived to be important in developing a comprehensive definition of children's services for West Virginia, examination of the individual items indicates a response pattern differing from those reported for the other major theme areas. For example, 20% of the children's services professional

Table 2

Perceived Importance By Major Theme - All Respondent Groups

Major Themes	IMPORTANCE: Not Important (0) N	%	Slightly Important (1) N	%	Moderately Important (2) N	%	Fairly Important (3) N	%	Highly Important (4) N	%
I. Relationship of the family to Children's Services (Items #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10)										
A. Public School Responses	3	0.9	8	2.6	24	7.9	101	33.3	167	55.4
B. WV Responses	2	0.6	11	3.6	23	7.6	74	24.3	194	63.8
C. National Responses	0	0.0	4	1.4	25	8.7	65	22.9	195	67.5
II. Societal Attitudes Toward Children's Needs (Items #6, 9, 21, 22)										
A. Public School Responses	4	2.8	8	5.6	9	6.3	46	31.9	77	53.5
B. WV Responses	2	1.3	2	1.3	13	8.6	44	29.1	90	59.3
C. National Responses	0	0.0	5	3.5	8	5.6	31	21.5	100	69.4
III. Role of the State (Items #18, 19, 20, 23)										
A. Public School Responses	15	10.3	14	9.7	23	15.9	62	42.8	31	21.4
B. WV Responses	13	9.0	16	11.0	20	13.8	42	29.0	54	37.2
C. National Responses	4	2.9	15	10.8	23	16.5	43	30.9	54	38.8

Table 2 (continued)

Major Themes	Not Important (0) N	%	Slightly Important (1) N	%	Moderately Important (2) N	%	Fairly Important (3) N	%	Highly Important (4) N	%
					IMPORTANCE					
IV. Perspective/Focus of Delivery Systems (Items #11, 16, 14)										
A. Public School Responses	3	2.8	1	0.9	9	8.3	26	23.9	70	64.2
B. WV Responses	3	2.6	4	3.5	3	2.6	20	17.4	85	73.9
C. National Responses	0	0.0	2	1.8	4	3.7	16	14.7	87	79.8
V. Service Delivery (Items #12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26, 27)										
A. Public School Responses	5	1.7	10	3.4	19	6.5	68	23.1	192	65.3
B. WV Responses	1	.01	6	2.1	19	6.7	37	13.1	219	77.7
C. National Responses	0	0.0	11	3.8	31	10.7	32	11.1	215	74.4

Table 2 (continued)

Major Themes	IMPORTANCE									
	Not Important (0)		Slightly Important (1)		Moderately Important (2)		Fairly Important (3)		Highly Important (4)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
IV. Perspective/Focus of Delivery Systems (Items #11, 16, 14)										
A. Public School Responses	3	2.8	1	0.9	9	8.3	26	23.9	70	64.2
B. WV Responses	3	2.6	4	3.5	3	2.6	20	17.4	85	73.9
C. National Responses	0	0.0	2	1.8	4	3.7	16	14.7	87	79.8
V. Service Delivery (Items #12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26, 27)										
A. Public School Responses	5	1.7	10	3.4	19	6.5	68	23.1	192	65.3
B. WV Responses	1	.01	6	2.1	19	6.7	37	13.1	219	77.7
C. National Responses	0	0.0	11	3.8	31	10.7	32	11.1	215	74.4

respondents from West Virginia and 13.7% of the National experts felt the four statements were "Not Important" or only "Slightly Important" in developing a comprehensive definition of children's services for the state. Interestingly, the responses from the National experts tended to be consistently higher than those from both of the West Virginia groups.

Sections of the survey provided respondents an opportunity to provide both general comments and comments related to specific questionnaire items. An analysis of both the general and individual comments did not reveal any systematic trends in the response. There were, however, several valid suggestions related to the format, organization and content of the concepts/statements. These suggestions were incorporated into the development of instrumentation for the conceptual needs assessment. These changes reflected the following:

1. The need to distinguish services supporting healthy families in their role as primary caregivers from preventive and intervention services.
2. The relationship of parents to social agencies.
3. The needs of children without families or where removal from their families is required.
4. The clarification of the role of the state in advocating and providing services for children.
5. The role of private as well as public agencies in providing children's services.

Analysis of the validation study data, therefore, indicated that these 27 concepts/statements were perceived to be important to the development of a comprehensive definition of children's services in West Virginia. These concepts/statements, incorporating the organizational revisions discussed above, provided the framework for the conceptual needs assessment of children's services in West Virginia (See Attachment B).

Perceptions from the Validation Study

Results from the validation study provided initial insights into perceptions concerning children's services needs in West Virginia. Children's services professionals from West Virginia and representatives from the public school systems were requested to provide both "Importance" and "Current Status" responses to the 27 concept/statements which comprised the validation survey instrument.

Table 3 contains a summary of the responses of the two groups to each of the 27 questionnaire items. Mean scores for each group are presented for each item. The "total" column reflects the mean score for both groups. Discrepancy scores (e.g. the difference between the "Importance" and "Current Status" mean scores) are presented for each group as a total. The "total" scores were used as a basis for this analysis.

Using the data from the "total" column, each item can be placed in a data analysis matrix as illustrated in Figure 3. Responses by all groups to each item can be collapsed into a single matrix for interpretation. An analysis of the data provided in Figure 3 indicate all but two (items 20 and 23) fall into the "high importance" cell. Similarly, the current status of each item was perceived to be "medium".

An analysis of the responses grouped by major theme area is provided in Table 4. Consistent with the individual item analysis, the grouped responses indicate high "importance" scores except for the major theme area identified as "Role of the State". All "Current Status" scores were relatively low resulting in positive discrepancies in each major theme area. In fact, three of the discrepancy scores were 1.21 or larger. These indicate a consistently low "current status" perception by respondents with the two priority need areas being "Service Delivery" and "Perspective/Focus of Delivery Systems".

Table 3

Discrepancy Data From Validation Study

Children's Service Concept/Statement	IMPORTANCE (1)			CURRENT STATUS (2)			DISCREPANCY		
	Professional	Public School	Total	Professional	Public School	Total			
	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	Professional	Public School	Total
1. Children's needs can best be met within and by their families.	3.53	3.63	3.58	2.56	2.55	2.56	0.97	1.08	1.03
2. As a mediating structure between the child and society, the family represents the primary delivery system of services to children.	3.45	3.68	3.56	2.50	2.69	2.59	0.95	0.99	0.97
3. Helping the family may be the most effective way to improve the lives of children.	3.84	3.67	3.75	2.55	2.50	2.53	1.29	1.17	1.22
4. Advocacy for children means advocating for their families.	3.46	3.11	3.29	2.11	2.61	2.34	1.35	0.50	0.95
5. Family well-being should be an outcome in assessing the effectiveness of children's policy.	3.46	3.33	3.39	2.24	2.43	2.34	1.22	0.90	1.05
6. Society's responsibility is the provision of services that strengthen and support family care of their children.	3.68	3.54	3.61	2.41	2.30	2.36	1.27	1.24	1.25

Table 3 (continued)

Children's Service Concept/Statement	IMPORTANCE (1)			CURRENT STATUS (2)			DISCREPANCY		
	Professional	Public School	Total	Professional	Public School	Total			
	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	Professional	Public School	Total
7. Children's services must be viewed in terms of an overall family policy.	3.24	3.24	3.24	2.29	2.43	2.36	0.95	0.81	0.88
8. Many problems facing families and their children are beyond individual control and reflect the external conditions under which they live.	3.49	3.16	3.33	2.51	2.63	2.57	0.98	0.53	0.76
9. Society should be responsible for providing a system of supportive services for families.	3.46	3.10	3.28	1.95	2.45	2.20	1.51	0.65	1.08
10. Children's well-being is a reflection of their families' abilities to develop and coordinate a support system of services.	3.21	3.22	3.27	1.94	2.61	2.28	1.27	0.71	0.99
11. A coordinated, comprehensive program of services to young children and their parents should be preventive in orientation and provide services on a continuous basis.	3.56	3.45	3.50	1.55	2.27	1.91	2.01	1.18	1.59

Table 3 (continued)

Children's Services Concept/Statements	IMPORTANCE (1)			CURRENT STATUS (2)			DISCREPANCY		
	Professional	Public School	Total	Professional	Public School	Total			
	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	Professional	Public School	Total
12. Children's services should be preventive and well publicized.	3.83	3.70	3.76	1.68	2.32	2.00	2.15	1.38	1.76
13. Children's services should be accessible.	3.83	3.74	3.79	2.00	2.55	2.27	1.83	1.19	1.52
14. Agencies responsible for working with children must coordinate and communicate with those responsible for working with their families.	3.78	3.82	3.80	2.05	2.27	2.16	1.73	1.55	1.64
15. Children's problems transcend specialized agency responsibilities and therefore necessitate a coordinating council or commission.	3.25	2.97	3.09	1.34	1.68	1.50	1.91	1.29	1.59
16. Children's services should seek to encourage family-oriented solutions.	3.71	3.76	3.73	2.05	2.32	2.18	1.66	1.44	1.55

Table 3 (continued)

Children's Services Concept/Statements	IMPORTANCE (1) Professional $\bar{X}$	IMPORTANCE (1) Public School $\bar{X}$	IMPORTANCE (1) Total $\bar{X}$	CURRENT STATUS (2) Professional $\bar{X}$	CURRENT STATUS (2) Public School $\bar{X}$	CURRENT STATUS (2) Total $\bar{X}$	DISCREPANCY Professional	DISCREPANCY Public School	DISCREPANCY Total
17. Collaborative efforts among state and local agencies - both public and private are critical to the development and delivery of coordinated children's services.	3.86	3.47	3.67	2.03	2.19	2.11	1.83	1.28	1.56
18. The state should have the responsibility for developing comprehensive policies for children and families.	2.76	3.00	2.88	1.79	2.12	1.94	0.97	0.88	0.94
19. The state has a responsibility as a political advocate for children.	3.14	2.65	2.90	1.75	2.20	1.96	1.39	0.45	0.94
20. Development of an interdisciplinary unit, above the level of operating departments, to advocate, monitor and plan children's services is a state responsibility.	2.60	2.50	2.55	1.25	1.88	1.54	1.35	0.62	1.01
21. Public recognition of services to children and their families by the legislature is critical to the success of children's services.	3.33	3.03	3.19	1.56	2.19	1.85	1.77	0.84	1.34

Table 3 (continued)

Children's Services Concept/Statement	IMPORTANCE (1) Professional $\bar{X}$	IMPORTANCE (1) Public School $\bar{X}$	IMPORTANCE (1) Total $\bar{X}$	CURRENT STATUS (2) Professional $\bar{X}$	CURRENT STATUS (2) Public School $\bar{X}$	CURRENT STATUS (2) Total $\bar{X}$	DISCREPANCY Professional	DISCREPANCY Public School	DISCREPANCY Total
22. Enhancing children's well-being is a public responsibility.	3.31	3.41	3.36	1.98	2.43	2.19	1.33	0.98	1.17
23. The state is a mediator between the family and services provided for children.	2.44	2.59	2.52	1.74	2.18	1.96	0.70	0.41	0.56
24. Policies mandating children's services should strengthen family capabilities to take responsibility for their children's needs.	3.44	3.15	3.31	1.69	2.28	1.99	1.75	0.87	1.32
25. Children's services should be sufficiently diverse to provide consumer options.	3.42	2.97	3.19	1.84	2.08	1.96	1.58	0.89	1.23
26. Children's services should be capable of simultaneously addressing multiple problems in a single family.	3.64	3.45	3.54	1.79	2.14	1.96	1.85	1.31	1.58
27. Providers of children's services should be held accountable.	3.60	3.79	3.69	2.29	2.22	2.26	1.31	1.57	1.43

IMPORTANCE
(0) = Not Important
(1) = Slightly Important
(2) = Moderately Important
(3) = Fairly Important
(4) = Highly Important

CURRENT STATUS
(0) = Not at All
(1) = To a Slight Extent
(2) = To a Moderate Extent
(3) = To a Fairly Large Extent
(4) = To a Very Large Extent

Figure 3.

Data Analysis Matrix By Item

CURRENT STATUS \ IMPORTANCE	High (2.67 - 4.00)	Medium (1.34 - 2.66)	Low (0.00 - 1.33)
High (2.67 - 4.00)			
Medium (1.34 - 2.66)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27	20, 23	
Low (0.0 - 1.33)			

Table 4

Discrepancy Analysis By Major Theme Area

Major Theme Area	Importance (1)	Current Status (2)	Discrepancy
1. Relationship of the Family to Children's Services (Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10)	3.43	2.45	0.98
2. Societal Attitudes Toward Children's Needs (Items 6, 9, 21, 22)	3.36	2.15	1.21
3. Role of the State (Items 18, 19, 20, 23)	2.71	1.85	0.86
4. Perspective/Focus of Delivery Systems (Items 11, 16, 24)	3.51	2.03	1.48
5. Service Delivery (Items 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 25, 26, 27)	3.57	2.03	1.54

(1) Scale: IMPORTANCE

(0) = Not Important
(1) = Slightly Important
(2) = Moderately Important
(3) = Fairly Important
(4) = Highly Important

(2) Scale: CURRENT STATUS

(0) = Not at All
(1) = To a Slight Extent
(2) = To a Moderate Extent
(3) = To a Fairly Large Extent
(4) = To a Very Large Extent

The remaining three phases of this study - the 'conceptual' needs assessment, the 'operational' needs assessment and the final phase of translating results into meaningful and workable goals and objectives will be completed by December, 1981. Data from the conceptual needs' assessment is being analyzed and the focus of the operational needs assessment is being determined.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Several problems and issues were encountered in the planning and implementation of a state level study of children's services needs. They relate both to the underlying nature of children's services as well as the methodological concerns associated with the needs assessment process.

The major problems of methodology was the problem of ensuring representative participation and input from all appropriate constituencies. The strategies for identifying subjects was to review as many community agency directories as possible. Although individuals from all areas of the state were involved, there were a preponderance of individuals working in the area of early childhood education.

This was also a particularly difficult task when applied to parents as users of children's services. To deal with this latter issue, respondents were requested to indicate whether they were parents of young children. Whether or not this was a distinguishing variable has not yet been assessed. Even if a distinguishing variable, this technique does not get to those consumers of children's services who are not professionally involved in the field of children's services.

The complexity and interactive nature of children's services was the single most complicating variable. The emerging conceptualization of

children's services focuses on the family and discussion of children's services demands that one begin to conceptualize the relationship of the child and the family to society. There is considerable diversity among both consumers and providers regarding this issue. In many ways, defining children's services is more a philosophical and social issue than an empirical one. A defensible conceptual framework for children's services must recognize its multidimensionality and simultaneously serve as a guide for the needs assessment process.

Another important issue relates to the effective utilization of the needs assessment results. This issue is directly related to the recognition that the provision of children's services do not occur in isolation but are embedded within a social, economic and political context.

Basically, the needs assessment process is an element of a systematic evaluation process being used to make more valid decisions. Decision-making related to public policy issues is a political process. Political decision-making, by necessity, must deal with a host of variables, only one of which is based upon the consensus of the social sciences. As a result, the design and validity of a needs assessment process (and overall evaluation process) will have restricted impact upon the legal, legislative and political decision-making that helps translate children's needs into direct services.

In identifying priorities, the needs assessment process usually narrows its focus to specific variables of concern. The complexity of children's services demands that the needs assessment model be sufficiently encompassing and flexible to accommodate unanticipated changes in society, institutional needs and resources over time. This is exacerbated by the fact that the impact of a needs assessment in this area appears to be based more upon political than technical factors.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Based upon the synthesis of a comprehensive review of related literature, analysis of existing services for children in West Virginia and the results of a National survey, a comprehensive definition of children's services has been developed. This definition describes children's services for children six years and under as a multidimensional, interactive concept composed of three elements: services/products provided to children six years and under, delivery/process variables and the contextual/mediating variables in which these two factors are embedded.

The conceptual framework has been externally validated by children's services professionals working with children in a variety of capacities. Those concepts identified as components of a comprehensive children's services program were generally perceived to be important by respondents. The only deviation from this trend was those concepts which dealt with the role of the state in children's services programs. This discrepancy reflects the need to clarify the role of the state as an advocate for children supporting the availability of services. Such a position does not necessarily assume that the state must provide these services, but the concepts related to the role of the state might have been misinterpreted in this light. The consistently higher acceptance of this factor by the national experts supports this interpretation.

The needs assessment of children's services in West Virginia has successfully completed the majority of its original objectives. Its strongest asset to date is the conceptual framework for defining children's services. This definition of what services for children ought to be has been externally

validated by children's services professionals both nationally and within West Virginia. This validation by professionals directly working with young children supports the ideas of those who are attempting to conceptualize what children's services ought to be.

The initial findings from the conceptual needs assessment suggests that in West Virginia, at least, there is considerable discrepancy between what children's services ought to be and what they are. The strongest discrepancies appear to be developing among issues of service coordination and delivery and the need for political advocacy for children. These initial findings stress once again the importance of context in understanding children's services and the complexity of translating what ought to be into quality services for our children.

ATTACHMENT A

CHILDREN'S SERVICES VALIDATION SURVEY

Following is a list of 27 statements relating to the concept of children's services. These statements, drawn from a comprehensive literature review and analysis of related materials, will be used to provide a framework for defining children's services in West Virginia. Your assistance in assessing the importance and current status of these concepts in West Virginia is greatly appreciated.

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to each statement in the following two ways:

First:

Determine how important you think each statement is to the development of a comprehensive definition of children's services for West Virginia. Then circle your responses accordingly on the LEFT.

Second:

Determine the extent to which you think each statement reflects the current concept of children's services in West Virginia. Then circle your responses accordingly on the RIGHT.

IMPORTANCE

(0) = Not Important
(1) = Slightly Important
(2) = Moderately Important
(3) = Fairly Important
(4) = Highly Important
(5) = Unable to Respond

CURRENT STATUS

(0) = Not at All
(1) = To a Slight Extent
(2) = To a Moderate Extent
(3) = To a Fairly Large Extent
(4) = To a Very Large Extent
(5) = Unable to Respond

IMPORTANCE		CURRENT STATUS IN WEST VIRGINIA
5 4 3 2 1 0	1. Children's needs can best be met within and by their families.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	2. As a mediating structure between the child and society, the family represents the primary delivery system of services to children.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	3. Helping the family may be the most effective way to improve the lives of children.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	4. Advocacy for children means advocating for their families.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	5. Family well-being should be an outcome in assessing the effectiveness of children's policy.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	6. Society's responsibility is the provision of services that strengthen and support family care of their children.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	7. Children's services must be viewed in terms of an overall family policy.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	8. Many problems facing families and their children are beyond individual control and reflect the external conditions under which they live.	0 1 2 3 4 5

IMPORTANCE		CURRENT STATUS IN WEST VIRGINIA
5 4 3 2 1 0	9. Society should be responsible for providing a system of supportive services for families.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	10. Children's well-being is a reflection of their families' abilities to develop and coordinate a support system of services.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	11. A coordinated, comprehensive program of services to young children and their parents should be preventive in orientation and provide services on a continuous basis.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	12. Children's services should be preventive and well publicized.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	13. Children's services should be accessible.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	14. Agencies responsible for working with children must coordinate and communicate with those responsible for working with their families.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	15. Children's problems transcend specialized agency responsibilities and therefore necessitate a coordinating council or commission.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	16. Children's services should seek to encourage family-oriented solutions.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	17. Collaborative efforts among state and local agencies - both public and private are critical to the development and delivery of coordinated children's services.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	18. The state should have the responsibility for developing comprehensive policies for children and families.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	19. The state has a responsibility as a political advocate for children.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	20. Development of an interdisciplinary unit, above the level of operating departments, to advocate, monitor and plan children's services is a state responsibility.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	21. Public recognition of services to children and their families by the legislature is critical to the success of children's services.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	22. Enhancing children's well-being is a public responsibility.	0 1 2 3 4 5

IMPORTANCE		CURRENT STATUS IN WEST VIRGINIA
5 4 3 2 1 0	23. The state is a mediator between the family and services provided for children.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	24. Policies mandating children's services should strengthen family capabilities to take responsibility for their children's needs.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	25. Children's services should be sufficiently diverse to provide consumer options.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	26. Children's services should be capable of simultaneously addressing multiple problems in a single family.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5 4 3 2 1 0	27. Providers of children's services should be held accountable.	0 1 2 3 4 5

COMMENTS: (Please feel free to provide any comments you desire)

What is your current position/occupation_____

Please return to: Ronald B. Childress
Children's Services
Needs Assessment Project
Sullivan Hall, Room 721
West Virginia College of Graduate Studies
Institute, W.Va. 25112

ATTACHMENT B

CHILDREN'S SERVICES NEEDS SURVEY

FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF POSSIBLE CHILDREN'S SERVICE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES FOR CHILDREN AGE SIX AND UNDER IN WEST VIRGINIA. THESE OBJECTIVES, DEVELOPED FROM A LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RELATED MATERIALS, HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES BY CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROFESSIONALS ACROSS THE STATE AND NATIONALLY. PLEASE ASSESS THE IMPORTANCE AND CURRENT STATUS OF THESE OBJECTIVES IN TERMS OF WHAT A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES SHOULD BE IN WEST VIRGINIA. YOUR ASSISTANCE WITH THIS MATTER IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE RESPOND TO EACH OBJECTIVE IN THE FOLLOWING TWO WAYS:

First:

Determine the importance of this objective for a comprehensive children's services program for children six and under in West Virginia. Then circle your response accordingly under Column A.

IMPORTANCE

(0) = Not Important
(1) = Slightly Important
(2) = Moderately Important
(3) = Fairly Important
(4) = Highly Important
(5) = Unable to Respond

Second:

Determine the extent to which you feel this objective is currently being achieved in West Virginia. Then circle your response accordingly under Column B.

CURRENT STATUS

(0) = Not at All
(1) = To a Slight Extent
(2) = To a Moderate Extent
(3) = To a Fairly Large Extent
(4) = To a Very Large Extent
(5) = Unable to Respond

OBJECTIVES	COLUMN A IMPORTANCE	COLUMN B IMPORTANCE
1. Promote the importance of families for meeting the needs of most children.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
2. Assist families in their role as a mediating structure between their children and society.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
3. Define the family as a primary unit for delivering services to children.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
4. Promote family well-being to enhance the meeting of children's needs.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
5. Provide services that support and strenghten family care of children.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
6. Plan and develop children's services within the context of overall family policies.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
7. Provide supportive services to enable "healthy" families to meet their children's needs.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
8. Provide supportive services to enable families in need to meet their children's needs.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
9. Promote families' capabilities in developing and coordinating a system of support services for their children.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
10. Provide continuous preventive services.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
11. Provide crisis-oriented services to children and their families.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
12. Publicize children's services.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
13. Ensure the accessibility of children's services.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
14. Provide mechanisms for coordination and communication among state (public) agencies responsible for working with children and their families.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
15. Encourage solutions to children's needs that maintain the family unit.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

OBJECTIVES	COLUMN A IMPORTANCE	COLUMN B IMPORTANCE
16. Provide mechasims for coordination and communication between the public and private sectors in developing and delivering coordinated children's services.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
17. Promote political advocacy for children and their families (ensuring that services are provided although not necessarily state supported).	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
18. Provide mechanisms for advocating and planning children's services on a statewide level.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
19. Provide mechanisms for coordinating and monitoring children's services on a statewide level.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
20. Promote public recognition of services for children and their families by the legislature.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
21. Promote the concept that enhancing children's well-being is a public responsibility.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
22. Provide children's services option sufficiently diverse to allow consumer (e.g. parent, guardian, etc.) choices compatible with their needs and values.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
23. Provide children's services capable of simultaneously addressing multiple needs of a single family.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
24. Provide mechanisms to ensure that providers of children's services are held accountable.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
25. Promote mutual respect and coordination between providers and families.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
26. Provide mechanisms for maintaining the family concept when children's needs cannot be met through the current family structure.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

PLEASE LIST ANY OTHER OBJECTIVES YOU FEEL SHOULD BE INCLUDED:

OBJECTIVES	COLUMN A IMPORTANCE	COLUMN B IMPORTANCE
27.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
28.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
29.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5

COMMENTS: (Please feel free to provide any comments you desire)

Additional Information:

1. What is your current position:
2. Is your position supported by: a. public funds_____ b. private funds_____
3. Are you a parent (check one) a. child(ren) 6 and under_____
   b. child(ren) over 6 years_____

PLEASE RETURN TO: Ronald B. Childress
Children's Services
Needs Assessment Project
Sullivan Hall, Room 721
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Institute, W. Va. 25112